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THE RECORD-HERALD DISCUSSION.

Ought Baptists to Affiliate with Ministers of Pedobaptist Churches by an Exchange of Pulpits?

This is the simple question set before us for our consideration and discussion. It may involve Landmarkism or it may not, no matter. We set the question of debate in this form that all may comprehend the matter of difference. It is just this question, and no other, that we propose to decide, if possible. Consequently, we do not intend to discuss the party of Pedobaptist ministers, or their honesty of purpose, or anything of that sort. We cheerfully acknowledge that many Pedobaptist ministers are eminently pious and thoroughly honest in their convictions. We hold them as a body, in high respect for their zeal, talents, learning, honesty of purpose, and abundant labors. Moreover, we believe the Lord has used them in the accomplishment of much good, and in this we rejoice. But notwithstanding all this, we believe that Baptists ought not to affiliate with the ministers of Pedobaptist churches by an exchange of pulpits. For this belief we ought, of course, to have good and sufficient reasons. Our reasons we propose to present in a series of articles of which this is the first. Whether they are good and sufficient, each reader of the Review and Herald must decide after hearing the other side.

It will not be expected by any one that we shall find a passage of Scripture which will say, in so many words, that we ought not to affiliate with such ministers. The Scriptures are given on the plan of specifying everything that we must or must not. General rules of conduct are laid down, and these we must apply to the solution of the problems of life as they meet us in the way. It we can show by fair interpretation and legitimate construction, that such affiliations are contrary to the sense and spirit of the Scriptures, we shall deem this sufficient.

As this discussion is between Baptists and the Baptists, with a view to shorten debate, we make the following statements, which, we presume, will be accepted as true:

1. Christ established churches on earth—visible organizations, upon which he conferred the authority, and I devoted the duty of propagating the gospel.

2. Repentance, faith and baptism (immersion) were made by divine authority, always and everywhere conditions of membership in the church.

3. The ministry was a body of men in the churches—never out of them—called of God to preach the gospel, and solemnly set apart to that work by authority of the church.

4. Soundness in the faith of the New Testament was held necessary to the ministry in Apostolic churches.

With Baptists these things are postulates, and hence require no discussion. Pedobaptists differ from us mainly in denying the second proposition in part. From these postulates it follows that Pedobaptist bodies are not New Testament churches and their ministry is not a New Testament ministry, and these things we believe and affirm. We do not mean that there are not many pious-minded, noble-hearted Christians men and women in these bodies. But we hold that these unscriptural organizations are not New Testament churches and their ministry is not a Scriptural ministry. This is the logic, some may say, the cold logic of Baptist doctrine. At any rate, this follows logically from our postulates. Pedobaptists themselves see the question in this light. Dr. N. L. Rice, a very high Presbyterian authority, says: "The action of baptism is immersion (c. e., only), then two serious conclusions follow: First, the overwhelming majority of Protestant Christians, to say nothing of Catholics are unchristianized. Second, that the churches which practice sprinkling are not the true churches of Christ and their ministers are not true ministers of Christ, but intruders into the sacred office, and profilers of sacred things."

Can any man be found singular enough to undertake to prove that the Scriptures do recognize unchristianized churches or an unchristianized ministry? It so, let him speak and we will hear. Till some one is found to affirm such a proposition, we will rest in the conclusion that there are no such things known in the Scriptures, and proceed to apply the conclusion to the question before us.

From the foregoing, we argue that

tters of Pedobaptist churches by an exchange of pulpits," because to do so is to recognize them as New Testament ministers while in truth, Baptists being judges, they are not.

If the Scriptures require baptism and church-membership prior to the exercise of ministerial functions, who are we that we should set aside this order and institute another?

Possibly some one will say that Pedobaptist ministers are not invited into our pulpits in the character of gospel ministers, but only as private Christian men, who are judged to be fit to edify our congregations. For the present we will say but little in reply to such a view of the case.

It seems hardly worth while to invite a man to fulfill the highest and most sacred functions of the ministerial office, and then say we do not think him a minister at all. The world will ask what is he doing in the place of a minister, if he is not one. Besides, all Pedobaptist preachers hold themselves as true ministers, and fill our pulpits, when at all, in that character and in no other. And the world will take this view of the party of Pedobaptist ministers, or their honesty of purpose, or anything of that sort.

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